

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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## THESIS

POLITICAL TRANSITION IN IRAN: THE IDEOLOGICAL  
STRUGGLE FOR POWER WITHIN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

by

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June 2002

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**POLITICAL TRANSITION IN IRAN: THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE FOR  
POWER WITHIN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over 20 years after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the actors have changed, but the political institution and structure remains nearly identical. There is no genuine hegemonic consensus in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI); basically, the same political tensions that contributed to the revolution are prevalent today. The only drastic difference is the shift in anger from the majority of the population demanding democratic reforms from the West to the ruling clerics.

Similarly, state structure, political, and socioeconomic policies from 1979 to the present have been consequential in producing an ideological conflict between the ruling clerics who seek power and authority and the reformists who seek to implement policy reforms. The outcome of this political dilemma will dictate domestic politics as well as foreign policy in Iran.

This thesis argues that pressure on Iranian foreign policy and domestic politics comes from the need to reconcile international concerns of Iranian interests with domestic concerns of Shi'i Islam and revolutionary ideology, which limits the policy options available to the Iranian government. This thesis examines the ideological struggle for control within the ruling elite and the decisive constraints it places on the range of economic and political options available to the ruling ulama.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has maintained an antagonistic behavior towards the Western world, particularly the United States, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Today the political institution and structure remains nearly unchanged since the revolution. There is no genuine hegemonic consensus in the IRI; basically, the same political tensions that contributed to the revolution are prevalent today. The only drastic difference is the shift in anger from the majority of the population demanding democratic reforms from the West to the ruling clerics.

Similarly, state structure, political, and socioeconomic policies from 1979 to the present have been consequential in producing an internal ideological struggle between the ruling clerics who seek power and authority and the reformists who seek to implement policy reforms within the IRI. The emergence of moderate politicians on the Iranian political scene in 1997 and their political role in domestic and foreign affairs has opened the door for differing opinions vis-à-vis the road to normalization of relationships between the IRI and the western world. The conservatives oppose reform policies which creates a daunting task for the moderates in their efforts to overcome the entrenched fundamentalists who hold and occupy strategic as well as important power positions in IRI politics. The outcome of this political dilemma will dictate domestic politics as well as foreign policy in Iran.

Currently, pro-reform policies contribute to increased liberalization in the IRI, which have enabled market forces to have a greater influence in the Iranian economy, thereby affecting Iran's actions in the international arena. The ruling ulama oppose these reform policies and the clear distinction in ideology between the moderates and conservatives contributes to the regime's political instability.

A foreseeable conclusion can be drawn that a political transition that puts reformists in power will contribute to socioeconomic and political development domestically as well as contribute to Iran's greater involvement as a positive actor in international politics. On the other hand, if the conservatives retain power, pro-reform policies to increase liberalization will be stalled, the stability of the regime jeopardized, and Iran will maintain its position as a threat to regional stability.

This thesis examines political transition within the IRI from 1977 to the present, specifically the period before the Iranian Revolution from 1977-1979 and after the election of President Khatami in 1997. The internal conflict within the ruling class of the IRI and its effect on domestic politics and foreign policy – specifically the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) is the focus of this thesis. The struggle for control within the ruling elite has placed decisive constraints on the range of economic and political options available to the ruling ulama. This thesis argues that pressure on Iranian foreign and domestic policy comes from the need to reconcile international concerns of Iranian interests with domestic concerns of Shi'i Islam and revolutionary ideology, which further limits the policy options available to the Iranian government.

The ideological conflict within the Islamic Republic of Iran is analyzed from a sociological perspective. It examines the ideological struggle in Iran associated with the sociopolitical transition that led to the Iranian Revolution and the post-revolutionary ideological conflict that currently persists with respect to Shi'i Islam and revolutionary ideology.

This thesis has three main chapters. Chapter II discusses Iran's transition from the Pahlavi dynasty to an Islamic Republic in terms of revolutionary ideology and revolutionary Shi'i Islam. Chapter III discusses the outcomes from the contentions for power between the moderates and the conservatives in terms of the interaction between class, politics, and ideology. Chapter IV discusses the current political situation in Iran today. It analyzes the Islamic Republic's political and socioeconomic reforms as well as the current ideological struggle for power between the moderates and the conservatives as the causal factor for the differences seen in the foreign policy divide between the European Union and the United States towards the IRI. The final chapter of this thesis concludes that the prevailing ideology dictates foreign and domestic policy. Additionally, it suggests that it is in the mutual interest of the EU and the US as interdependent allies to coordinate a common policy towards the IRI.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over 20 years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, many of the actors have changed, but the political institution and structure remains nearly the same. There is no genuine hegemonic consensus in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI); basically, the same political tensions that contributed to the revolution are prevalent today. The only drastic difference is the shift in anger from the majority of the population demanding democratic reforms from the West to the ruling clerics.

The state structure of Iran and its economic policies from 1953-1977 were consequential in determining the content of the revolutionary movement of 1977-1979. The White Revolution, specifically its aspects of land distribution and rapid modernization, prompted an opposing political populism that consisted of a deliberate, mass based, middle class social coalition. This middle class revolutionary movement, under the fundamentalist leadership of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini, formed the basis for the political resistance to overthrow Mohammad Reza Shah's regime.

The Shah's rapid implementation of state power and modernization programs during the White Revolution was a major contribution to the Iranian Revolution. The White Revolution contributed to widespread social discontent and disorientation<sup>1</sup>, which created a radical but pragmatic middle class movement that formed the basis for the political and social opposition to the Pahlavi dynasty.

The key players in this radical but pragmatic middle class movement were the ulama, the petty bourgeoisie, and the merchants. Later, Khomeini transitioned this same radical but pragmatic middle class coalition into a form of third world political populism to attack the upper class and the foreign powers while he strived to enter the modern world.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, state structure, political, and socioeconomic policies from 1980 to the present have been significant in producing an internal ideological struggle between the

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<sup>1</sup> Theda Skocopol, "Rentier State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution," *Theory and Society*, 11, no. 3 (May 1982), p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 17.

ruling clerics who seek power and authority and the reformists who seek to implement policy reforms within the IRI. The outcome of this political dilemma will dictate domestic politics as well as foreign policy in Iran.

Currently, pro-reform policies contribute to increased liberalization in the IRI, which have enabled market forces to have a greater influence in the Iranian economy, thereby affecting Iran's actions in the international arena. The ruling ulama oppose these reform policies, and the clear distinction in ideology between the moderates and conservatives contributes to the regime's political instability.

A foreseeable conclusion can be drawn that a political transition that puts reformists in power will contribute to socioeconomic and political development domestically as well as contribute to greater involvement as a positive actor in international politics. On the other hand, if the conservatives retain power, pro-reform policies to increase liberalization will be stalled, the stability of the regime jeopardized, and Iran will maintain its position as a threat to regional stability.

The political revolution in Iran was successful in 1979, but "the move toward a social revolutionary transformation was effectively stopped, and then reversed."<sup>3</sup> The post-revolutionary period produced an ideological struggle that conditioned class conflict. This reversal of the social revolutionary phase is "characterized by a systematic repression of the demands of the working class, the peasants, and ethnic minorities, on the one hand, and the consolidation of the economic and political power of the merchants and land owners on the other."<sup>4</sup> Intermediate organizations that established the link between the state and civil society were systematically undermined by the expansion of the repressive and bureaucratic apparatus of the state. Thus, demands within the Islamic Republic shifted from a revolutionary to an outright counter-revolutionary orientation.

This thesis explains that shift by focusing on the internal conflict within the ruling class of the Islamic Republic. The internal struggle for control within the ruling elite has

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<sup>3</sup> Mansoon Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 224.

placed decisive constraints on the range of economic and political options available to the ruling ulama.

#### **A. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

This thesis analyzes the ideological conflict within the Islamic Republic of Iran from a sociological perspective. It examines the ideological struggle in Iran associated with the sociopolitical transition that led to the Iranian Revolution and the post-Revolutionary ideological conflict that currently persists with respect to Shi'i Islam and revolutionary ideology. This hypothesis argues that the prevailing party from the ideological struggle sets the tone for foreign policy as well as domestic politics.

The Revolution was significant in solving many of Iran's problems; however, it did not lead to political democracy. The changes that occur within a country that lead to political democracy are paramount, as they are the milestones of the transition process. The changes that grant individuals and groups greater freedom in terms of rights and privileges are of extreme importance. This process of transition is referred to as liberalization.<sup>5</sup> As a result, liberalization is a precursor to the attainment of political democracy that the masses are demanding.

This thesis uses a historical institutional approach to analyze Iranian foreign and domestic policy. This approach utilizes historical patterns that shape the actions of individuals that produce tangible results. It also "illuminate[s] how political struggles 'are mediated by the institutional setting in which [they] take place.'"<sup>6</sup> Formal organizations and the informal rules and procedures that define institutions are included in this method.

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<sup>5</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillipe C. Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies," in *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, eds. Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillipe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, eds. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstretch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 2.

The specific hypothesis that I have drawn from the theory of historical institutionalism in Iran suggests that pressure on Iranian foreign and domestic policy comes from the need to reconcile international concerns of Iranian interests with domestic concerns of Shi'i Islam and revolutionary ideology, which limits the win-set of policy options available to the Iranian government.

## **B. THESIS ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE**

This thesis has three main chapters. Chapter II discusses Iran's transition from the Pahlavi dynasty to an Islamic Republic in terms of revolutionary ideology and revolutionary Shi'i Islam. It explains that the Iranian revolution combined individualistic, organizational, and class-centered theories of revolution. Additionally, it provides an analysis of how the prevailing revolutionary theory, revolutionary Shi'ism, and the effects of the White Revolution provided the political ideology for the formation of a middle class revolutionary coalition. Chapter II also provides an explanation of how Ayatollah Khomeini provided the religious leadership for the political opposition to Mohammad Reza Shah's regime, which established the beginning of the IRI's poor relations with the United States.

This thesis delineates the conditions in which the individual (Khomeini), organizations (the state), and classes (petty bourgeoisie, merchants, etc.) either resorted to revolutionary action or caused revolutionary action to occur to accomplish their individual or collective political agendas.

Chapter III discusses the outcomes from the contentions for power between the moderates and the conservatives in terms of the interaction between class, politics, and ideology. It examines the reforms in the IRI that have occurred since 1997 to promote privatization and foreign investment. In addition, it examines the rising demand (primarily from the youth) for increased human and political rights and other democratic reforms.

Chapter IV discusses the current political situation in Iran today. It analyzes the Islamic Republic's political and socioeconomic reforms and it analyzes the current ideological struggle for power between the moderates and the conservatives as the causal factor for the differences seen in the foreign policy divide between the European Union

(EU) and the United States (US) towards the IRI. Additionally, chapter IV establishes that the current reforms in Iran to promote privatization and foreign investment provide the potential for rapprochement with the US and ultimately the normalization of relations between the two countries.

The final chapter of this thesis concludes that the prevailing ideology dictates foreign and domestic policy. Additionally, it suggests that it is in the mutual interest of the EU and the US as interdependent allies to coordinate a common policy towards the IRI. Indeed, the EU and the US will have to find a middle ground that will facilitate support for genuine and positive reforms that will transition the IRI to democracy and reorient it to democratic behaviors on the international level.



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## II. PRE-REVOLUTIONARY IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

State ideology in Iran under Reza Shah and his son were very similar. They both incorporated secularism and nationalism as the ideological principle in their cultural policies. The main difference was that under Reza Shah, it was similarly the dominant cultural trend within civil society and thus the ideology of his opponents. However, under the younger Shah, the ideology of the opposition changed. Social critics and ideologues used Islam to address Iran's problems. As the Shah continued his secular anti-religious ideology, the gap between state and civil society widened and his regime's domination over society became more explicit.<sup>7</sup>

It should be emphasized that revolutionary Islamic discourse was not simply a preexisting ideology resting on the political theory of early Shi'ism or an ulama institutional development, ready to be used by discontented groups and classes against the Shah. Rather it was produced by diverse ideologues such as Ayatollah Khomeini, Ale-Ahmad, and Ali Shari'ati, who were all inspired by the problem of political oppression, the states' policies, and the highly uneven distribution of resources. In producing the imageries of the alternative Islamic society the ideologues were constrained not only by Islamic concepts, but also by the state ideology itself. Islamic Revolutionary discourse was produced in contradistinction with the state ideology, because for them, whatever the state ideology was [it] was not right.<sup>8</sup>

The Islamic movement, although it appeared to be a single movement directed toward a common enemy – the Shah, it consisted “of various Islamic ideologues from diverse backgrounds, interests, and political agendas”<sup>9</sup> that contributed to the rise and spread of revolutionary Islamic discourse.

Although there were many causes for the Iranian Revolution of 1977-1979, the main cause analyzed for the purpose of this thesis was revolutionary Islamic discourse. It is examined in terms of: revolutionary Shi'i Islam, revolutionary ideology, the White Revolution (specifically the aspects of land distribution and modernization), and the

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<sup>7</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>9</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 145.

revolutionary middle class coalition that formed the basis for political opposition to the Shah's regime.

#### A. SHI'I ISLAM

"Traditional Iranian society was highly religious, and religion was the dominant, if not all encompassing medium for ideological thinking."<sup>10</sup> The nineteenth century Shi'i Islam constituted an important element of the state ideological apparatus, and the ulama were an integral part of the country's traditional power structure.<sup>11</sup> "[T]he process of the people's mobilization against the state, the transformation of economic difficulties and social discontent into a relevant crisis, and the effective paralysis of the state's repressive machine occurred through Shi'i revolutionary discourse."<sup>12</sup> There is a reoccurring connection between religion and political concerns of various groups and social classes. In fact, "... religious rituals and symbols [have often been used] in the mobilization efforts to change or resist unpopular policies initiated by the state."<sup>13</sup>

An additional characteristic of Shi'i Islam is the continual exposition and reinterpretation of doctrine. The most recent example is Khomeini's expounding of the doctrine of velayat-e-faqih or the political guardianship of the community of believers by scholars trained in religious law. This concept has not been a traditional idea in Shi'i Islam and is, in fact, an innovation by Khomeini. His interpretation of the doctrine contends that the clergy, by virtue of their superior knowledge of the laws of God, are the best qualified to rule the society of believers who are preparing themselves on earth to live eternally in heaven.<sup>14</sup> The concept of velayat-e-faqih thus provides the doctrinal

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<sup>10</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Mansoon Moaddel, "The Shi'i Ulama and the State in Iran", *Theory and Society*, 15 (1986), pp. 522-524.

<sup>12</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad as both a political and religious leader is used as the basis for this argument.

basis for theocratic government, an experiment that Twelver Shi'i jurists had not attempted before the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

Khomeini's concept of velayat-e-faqih goes beyond the concept that Shi'i jurists or faqihs are entitled to make legal judgments based on the laws of Islam. Khomeini contends that jurists have a divine mandate to control the day-to-day administrative operations of the state and assume direct political authority of the government. This position is highly debatable. Critics argue that this elevates the ulama to the exclusive domain of the Imam. However, the concept that Ayatollah Khomeini began as theology quickly emerged as political ideology.

Shi'i Islam reintegrated the disenfranchised back into society as a sociopolitical opposition movement against the Shah's reforms. As the state continuously failed the general population socially and politically, many became dependent on the ulama as their only means of recourse. This was due to the rise of revolutionary Islam as a meaningful opposition movement against the Shah's repressive monarchy. Ayatollah Khomeini asserted his political ideology and utilized the ulama's leadership and participation in society to mobilize this newly formed coalition toward a Shi'i revolutionary ideology in opposition to the Shah's ideology of monarchy.

## **B. THEORIES OF REVOLUTION**

The individual mental state is considered to be the growth place of revolutionary ideology. According to Zaret, "... ideological producers respond to the problem of contested authority."<sup>15</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini developed and used revolutionary ideology as many politicians do when they "lose their position in the polity and ... are refused access to power."<sup>16</sup>

Revolutionary ideology was paramount in creating and sustaining a middle class revolutionary movement under the fundamentalist leadership of Khomeini, which formed the basis for the political resistance to overthrow Mohammad Reza Shah's regime. The

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<sup>15</sup> David Zaret, "Religion and the Rise of Liberal-Democratic Ideology in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England," *American Sociological Review* 54 (April 1989), p. 164.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley, 1978), p. 191.

theory of revolution is particularly significant in the formation of an ideology because ideology shapes revolutionary action and “(r)evolution has ... a content, which is produced by the interaction between class, politics, and ideology.”<sup>17</sup> The coalition of ulama, petty bourgeoisie, and merchants demonstrates that revolutionary ideology transcends barriers and forms a bond between participants created by the ideology itself. In the specific instance of Iran, revolutionary ideology became the dominant discourse in society and shaped what was to become the revolutionary situation.

Iran was one of the strongest repressive regimes in the Middle East. “The Shah was a pillar of US policy in the Middle East.”<sup>18</sup> President Jimmy Carter referred to Iran as “an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Iranian Revolution surprised many social scientists.

The variety of structural and organizational models advanced by such eminent scholars as Moore, Wolf, Paige, Tilly, and Skocpol provide inadequate guidelines for an analysis of the Iranian revolution. Moore, Wolf, and Paige deal with the specific landlord-peasant conflict that produces a revolutionary outcome. ... Tilly’s organizational model on revolution overemphasizes the causes emanating from the rational dictate of contention for power and does not capture the revolution phenomenon in its entirety – as a mode of action and not simply as an outcome of the contention for power or class conflict. Finally, in addition to the difficulties Skocpol avowedly exposes as challenging her theory of revolution, the Iranian Revolution brings to the center of the problem the factor of ideology, a variable ignored in structural theories of revolution.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 255.

<sup>19</sup> Suzanne Maloney, “America and Iran: From Containment to Coexistence”, *Brookings Institution Policy Brief No. 87* (July 2001), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, pp. 1-2.

## 1. Individualistic Theory

The individualistic theory suggests that excessively rapid structural change builds up unresolved tensions that erupt into disorder when and where restraints are weak.<sup>21</sup> Tensions can be produced through an unequal system that produces disoriented individuals whose social and political ties to the government have been eroded.<sup>22</sup> In forming the individualistic argument, one can argue that the rapid economic growth and modernization of the 1960's and 1970's followed by economic crisis was sufficient to produce disoriented and socially discontent individuals highly susceptible to Khomeini's fundamentalist appeal. Moaddel finds this argument problematic because Iran's pre-revolutionary economic growth was unprecedented and because he believes that the economic difficulties that contributed to society's general discontent were not of the nature to produce an intolerable gap between expectation and achievement that would result in individual disorientation and confusion.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Arjomand advances the theory of individual perspective in *The Turban for the Crown*. Arjomand argued that rapid social change resulted in social dislocation and normative disturbance in Iran. According to Arjomand, Shi'i Islam as the opposition social and political movement reintegrated the dislocated groups and individuals back into society when the state failed.<sup>24</sup>

In *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Abrahamian credits Huntington's model of uneven development for the Iranian Revolution. Huntington states that domestic, social, and political forces were affected by the West. He additionally explains how the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, was produced by European economic filtration, class conflict, and the growth of the new intelligentsia. Huntington's model of revolution

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<sup>21</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Revolution and the Social System* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1964), p. 47.

<sup>23</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Said A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 4-5.

supports the basic premise of this thesis. According to Huntington, the Iranian Revolution was produced by rapid economic development inconsistent with the existing social and political institutions.

Although the Shah helped modernize the socioeconomic structure, he did little to develop the political system – to permit the formation of pressure groups, open the political arena for various social forces, forge links between the regime and the new classes, preserve the existing links between the regime and the old classes, and broaden the social base of the monarchy that, after all, had survived mainly because of the 1953 military coup d’etat. Instead of modernizing the political system, the Shah, like his father, based his power on the three Pahlavi pillars: the armed forces, the court patronage network, and the vast state bureaucracy.<sup>25</sup>

Moaddel rejects this argument. “It was not so much a disjunction between institutionalization and modernization that produced the Iranian Revolution, but rather, among other things, the conflict of interests generated by the very process of economic development.”<sup>26</sup> Although Moaddel does agree with Huntington, that “... the state’s economic policies and bureaucratic expansion destroyed the intermediate organizations that historically had connected the state to civil society. ... [he does not agree] that the gap between the state and civil society was the major cause of the revolution.”<sup>27</sup>

## **2. Organizational Theory**

Organizational theory takes into account:

[H]ow dissatisfied individuals accept revolutionary ideology and are organized into collective action against the state. Revolutionary ideology must first be brought into contact with interested audiences. Books and articles are to be written, pamphlets and newspapers published, audiences brought to the appropriate sites, speeches to be prepared and effectively delivered – in short, ideas are produced and disseminated.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 435.

<sup>26</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 8.

The basic concept is resource mobilization and collective action. According to Oberschall, “[m]obilization refers to the process by which a discontented group assembles and invests resources for the pursuit of group goals. Social control refers to the same processes, but from the point of view of the incumbents or the group that is being challenged.”<sup>29</sup> This “social conflict rises from the structured arrangement of individuals and groups in a social system – from the very fact of social organization.”<sup>30</sup>

Tilly provides two models of collective action based on the concept of resource mobilization. The “mobilization model” is the first. It refers to the process where contenders for power gain collective control over resources. The model’s parameters are interest, organization, mobilization, collective action and opportunity.<sup>31</sup> The “polity model” is second. It “relates contenders to a government and to other contenders – both challengers and members of the polity – via coalitions and struggles for power.”<sup>32</sup>

According to Tilly, revolution erupts when “a government previously under the control of a single sovereign polity becomes the object of effective, competing, mutually exclusive claims on the part of two or more distinct polities.”<sup>33</sup> The rise of revolutionary Shi’ism adequately explained in terms of the interaction between the organization of Shi’i religion and Iran’s pre-Revolutionary social conditions can be used to support the organizational model.<sup>34</sup> Keddie supports this interpretation. “Revolution is a form of collective action involving the process of mobilization, the structure of power, and the relations between the two.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Anthony R. Oberschale, *Social Conflicts and Social Movements* (Englewood, Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> Oberschale, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 191.

<sup>34</sup> Moaadel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 9.



The implementation of revolutionary Shi'ism by Khomeini supports the organizational model. According to Keddie, the interaction between the religion of Shi'i Islam and Iran's revolutionary social conditions contributed to the rise of revolutionary Shi'ism.<sup>36</sup> As Moaddel points out:

Keddie relates the change in Shi'i institutional doctrine in the late eighteenth century – the rise of the Usuli school and the decline of the Akhbari – to the growth in ulama power in society. The Usuli doctrine thus helps to eliminate confusion among the ulama regarding the nature of their role in society, and provides an organizational ideology to justify their intervention in politics. The ulama's independent sources of income from religious endowments and religious taxes further expanded their institutional autonomy and political power, for they did not have to rely on the state for financial support.<sup>37</sup>

In the context of the ulama-state interaction, the Shah's modernization programs stripped the ulama of their traditional socioeconomic and political role in the community. Within this context, Khomeini's political ideology and the ulama's participation in the revolution support their opposition to the Shah's ideology of monarchy as an Islamic alternative.

Moaddel rejects this argument for two reasons: First, the state's anti-clerical policy began under Reza Shah,<sup>38</sup> in which the ulama lost gradual control of the educational and judicial institutions and their seats in Parliament. Their religious endowments also came under the government's control. However, Moaddel suggests that the ulama still maintained a form of alignment with the state.<sup>39</sup>

Second, Moaddel does not accept the concept of audience availability. In his opinion, the conditions that would prompt significant numbers to participate in an ulama led opposition cannot be explained from the structure of an organizational analysis.

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<sup>36</sup> Nikki, R. Keddie "The Roots of Ulama Power in Modern Iran" in Keddie, (ed.), *Scholars, Saints and Sufis* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), p. 223.

<sup>37</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> The first Pahlavi Shah, (1925-1941).

<sup>39</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 11.

Given that Iran is a Shi'i state, Keddie's argument supporting the organizational model is stronger. "The Usuli doctrine gave the living Mujtahids a power beyond anything claimed by the Sunni Ulama, and gave to their rulings a sanction beyond anything nearly decreed by the state."<sup>40</sup>

### **3. Class Theory**

In class theory, the type of people or audience likely to participate in a revolution becomes central to the theory. Marx suggests that revolutionary actors are produced by key historical processes such as changes in the economy and the emergence of new class positions following genuine and "natural" permanent class struggles.<sup>41</sup> Class struggles intensify in revolt situations; the repressive apparatus of the ruling class collapses; the reigning ideology loses validity; the revolutionary consciousness of the ascending opposition negates the existing social order and provides an alternate vision of society.<sup>42</sup> In Keddie's comparative analysis of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 and the Revolution of 1977-1979, she asserts that Marx's theory explains the Iranian Revolution:

The closest socioeconomic revolutionary model for Iran's experience appears to be the Marxist formula, without any of the elaborations or modifications added recently. This formula in essence, postulates that revolution occurs whenever the relations of production – particularly the control and ownership of the society's basic means of production – have changed beyond the ability of the old forms of political power and state organization to subsume the new economic order.<sup>43</sup>

In *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, Parsa presents an explanation of the Iranian Revolution that incorporates both class analysis and organizational theories of revolution:

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<sup>40</sup> Nikki R. Keddie "The Roots of Ulama Power in Modern Iran" in Keddie, (ed.), *Scholars, Saints and Sufis* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), p. 223.

<sup>41</sup> Karl Marx, "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" in *Marx and Engels, Selected Works*, New York: International Publishers (1977), p.182.

<sup>42</sup> Marx, p.182.

<sup>43</sup> Nikki R. Keddie, "The Iranian Revolution in Comparative Perspective", *American Historical Review*, 88 no. 3 (June 1983), p. 591.

Parsa argues that the Iranian Revolution is an instance of the twentieth century revolutions produced by the interaction between high state intervention in the economy and a high level of social cohesion among disadvantaged groups within the third world context of economic dependency and vulnerability. In Iran, the state's intervention in capital allocation and accumulation favored large and modern enterprises to the disadvantage of small, traditional businesses and industries in the bazaar as well as the working class. These policies undermine the state's legitimacy as they revealed that it served particular, rather than societal interests.<sup>44</sup>

The bazaaris<sup>45</sup> were adversely affected by the state's mismanagement of the situation, and with no other mobilization option, the bazaaris channeled their struggles through the mosques. "Repression made it very difficult to mobilize ... and the bazaaris turned increasingly to the mosque for mobilization."<sup>46</sup> "The proclamation of reform provided an opportunity for other collectivities that lacked autonomous resources (such as workers and white collar employees) to engage in collective action against the state. Toward the end of 1978, all major opposition social classes formed a coalition [which became a broad-based middle class, socio-political revolutionary movement] that recognized the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini."<sup>47</sup> This radical but pragmatic middle class coalition formed the basis for the political resistance against the Shah during the Iranian Revolution.

### C. WHITE REVOLUTION

The White Revolution was simultaneously the Shah's attempt at economic modernization and his attempt at political stabilization. He intended to accelerate nation building and to enhance his regime's image as the promoter and guardian of the public welfare.

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<sup>44</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> The bazaaris were those classes tied to traditional industry and trade that organized in the bazaar such as the petty bourgeoisie and the merchants.

<sup>46</sup> Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 124.

<sup>47</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 14.

The Shah's modernization programs resulted in an increased dissociation of the state's ideology from religion. The Shah's political and economic policies had a devastating impact on the country's class structure and class politics.

These policies reinforced the expansion of the state's bureaucratic and repressive apparatus, hence the growth of a bureaucratic authoritarian (BA) state. On one hand, state initiated economic policies highly antagonized the indigenous classes. On the other hand, its systematic disorganization of the collectivities within civil society conditioned the nature and form of the opposition movement.<sup>48</sup>

The Shah proclaimed, "Iran needs a deep and fundamental revolution that could, at the same time put an end to all the social inequality and exploitation, and all aspects of reaction which impeded progress and kept our society backward."<sup>49</sup> The Shah's reforms provided the basis for his ideological campaign against his opposition. The Shah associated his reign with the principles of progress, civilization, and equality.

The Shah portrayed himself as the champion for revolutionary change and called his revolution the Shah-People's Revolution.<sup>50</sup> As the state discourse became totalitarian, in 1975 the Shah dissolved all official political parties. He declared the country a one party system, called the Rastakhiz party.<sup>51</sup> The regime's new slogan became, "One country, one Shah, and now one party."<sup>52</sup>

As time progressed, the Shah demanded total ideological commitment to his regime:

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<sup>48</sup> Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *The White Revolution*, 2d.ed. (Tehran: 1967), p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Pahlavi, *The White Revolution*, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> Sepehr Zabih, *Iran's Revolutionary Upheaval: An Interpretative Essay* (San Francisco: Alchemy Books, 1979), p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Zabih, *Iran's Revolutionary Upheaval*, p. 7.

Iranians had the choice of supporting or rejecting the three basic principles of Monarchy, Constitution, and the White Revolution. Supporters now would join the Rastakhiz party to consolidate and promote these objectives. Opponents could either remain apathetic and be non-participants (in which case they would be denied the fruits of Iran's prosperity) or if they wished to actively oppose these principles, they would be allowed to leave the country.<sup>53</sup>

Brutal expressions of dissent were characteristic of the ruling Iranian despots and the Shah. The Shah and a few of his close associates concentrated all major political decision-making powers in their own hands. As policy makers utilized informal methods for control, Iranian society became de-politicized and national integration was maintained by brute force.<sup>54</sup>

### **1. Land Reform**

The Shah's implementation of land reform in the context of the state's alliance with international capital caused a great deal of tension in the rural and urban areas and contributed to the factors that caused the revolution. The concentration of 65 percent of land prior to land reform was primarily with large landlords compared to 15 percent of property owned by the peasants. Religious institutions controlled 15 percent of the total amount of land while the state land or crown estate combined made up five percent.<sup>55</sup>

It was in the Shah's interest to stabilize the kingdom and to terminate the domination of the land owning class in rural areas. To accomplish this, the Shah's chief objective was to emancipate the peasants. In light of the economic differences, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, this reform was well overdue to prevent the possibility of a

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<sup>53</sup> Zabih, *Iran's Revolutionary Upheaval*, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 76.

<sup>55</sup> Bahman Nirumand, *Iran: The New Imperialism in Action*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), p. 126.

peasant-based revolutionary movement.<sup>56</sup> This was also the principal concern of the United States, which pressured the Shah to implement land reform.<sup>57</sup>

Land reform in Iran failed for two reasons. First, it was incomplete. Official figures report that few peasants received land. Out of a total of 49,000 villages, only 13,000 to 14,000 villages were distributed during the first phase.<sup>58</sup>

The land reform did not affect the landless peasants, consisting of sharecroppers with only their labor to sell, laborers with regular wages, and casual laborers. This group constituted from 40 to 50 percent in the villages. Only 14 to 16 percent of the villages were distributed by mid-1964, at which time the first phase of the reform was declared complete.<sup>59</sup>

It is estimated that eight percent of peasants received land in the first phase and approximately six to seven percent received land in the second phase for a total of 14 to 15 percent of peasants becoming new landowners.<sup>60</sup>

Second, land reform failed because the government did not form a solid alliance with the newly liberated peasant farmers. In addition, the Shah did not support the rural cooperative. The land reform program underwent a considerable de-radicalization that resulted from pressure from conservative groups and the 1963 disturbances that sparked civil unrest across the country. The disturbances originated from the arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini for his criticisms of the Shah's foreign concession. Khomeini compared the Shah's grant of diplomatic immunity to United States military personnel, to Iran's humiliating capitulation of the past.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 73.

<sup>57</sup> Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>58</sup> Nikki R Keddie, "The Iranian Village Before and After Land Reform" in Henry Bernstein (ed.), *Underdevelopment and Development* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 73.

<sup>60</sup> Keddie, "The Iranian Village", pp. 157-170.

<sup>61</sup> Mohammad Borghei, "Iran Religious Establishments" in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, eds. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 76.

Land reform also failed to gain the support of the indigenous classes and contributed to the atmosphere of social discontent. Further, it demonstrated how the interaction of class struggle, the opposition movement, and the state initiated economic development produced the revolutionary coalesced of 1977-1979.

## **2. Modernization**

The Shah's regime was characterized by two broad policy orientations:

- (1) A systematic attempt to exclude all the dominated classes – and, to some extent, the indigenous dominant classes – from major political positions and to prevent them from participating in important economic decision-making; and
- (2) The adoption of an economic strategy that promoted dependent capitalist development.<sup>62</sup>

The expansion of bureaucracy was another mechanism of the state's control of civil society. It was likely the result of the state's intervention in the economy; however, the growth of the bureaucracy resulted in over expansion that was identified as the cause of the failure of the government's development project.<sup>63</sup> Funds intended for capital investment were channeled into the day-to-day activities of the state.<sup>64</sup> The Shah's expansion of bureaucracy contributed to his political control of the state. Additionally, "[t]he Shah used the bureaucracy for co-opting the members and leaders of opposition groups. Civil service positions were created and often handed out as political favors and rewards to opposition leaders for their conciliations and compromise with the regime."<sup>65</sup> The bureaucracy grew to an outrageous size and its expansion caused the decline of intermediate organizations such as *guilds*, *anjumas* (societies), the *dowreh* (circle), the

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<sup>62</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 52.

<sup>63</sup> George B. Baldwin, *Planning and Development in Iran* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967), p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power* (New York: St Martin's, 1979), p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 59.

local magnates, the *boneh* (traditional farming organizations), and other aspects of corporate life.<sup>66</sup>

The gap between the state and civil society grew as the bureaucracy and its repressive apparatus continued to expand.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the state alliance with foreign powers antagonized the indigenous classes and helped to determine the content of the 1977-1979 revolutionary movement.

### **3. Military**

It is important to touch on the Shah's ineffective use of the military and the secret police. The Shah's administration of the armed forces was peculiar compared to that of former monarchs. His military and secret police did not act without his explicit instructions. The Shah effectively discouraged horizontal links among the senior ranking generals, which undermined the potential development of a corporatist structure in the military. This helped to prevent the possibility of a coup but the result was an armed force that resembled the patrimonial armies that were, in Weber's words, incapable of any actions without their ruler and completely dependent on him.<sup>68</sup> Thus, unlike the militaries of the past that crushed the people's attempt at revolution, the Shah's military and secret police did not act because they did not receive the Shah's explicit instructions to engage the demonstrators. Critics argue that had the Shah quieted those responsible for the uprising from the onset, there may not have been an Iranian revolution from 1977-1979.

### **D. RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS REVOLUTIONARIES**

The political opposition and sociopolitical middle class revolutionaries opposed to the Shah began to resort to Islam as their attempt to address the country's problems.

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<sup>66</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 60.

<sup>67</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 61.

<sup>68</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 53.



The Shah's economic policies and their impact on class politics provided a better understanding of the factors that led to the decline of secular ideologies and the resurgence of Islam as the dominant discourse of the opposition movement.

The state's economic development strategy affected the distribution of wealth and patterned class conflict. The ulama, petty bourgeoisie, the merchants, and the land owners were antagonized by state economic policies.

"The indigenous property owning class were the petty bourgeoisie (craftsman and retailers), merchants, and feudal landowners. The merchants, craftsman, and retailers were mainly (but not exclusively) organized in the bazaar, which had been the commercial focus of the city and its hinterland."<sup>69</sup> The new middle class and the working class also increased from the country's industrial development and state bureaucracy expansion. "The new middle class, consisting of civil servants, teachers and school administrators, engineers, and white collar workers was estimated to number 1.8 million in 1977. The working class, consisting of wage earners, employed in different industrial sectors, grew rapidly as a result of economic development of the 1960's and 1970's."<sup>70</sup>

### **1. The Bazaar**

The bazaar opposed the political elite through much of the twentieth century and had been an important political, economic, and social force in Iran since at least the time of the Qajar dynasty. The Pahlavi shahs viewed the bazaar as an impediment to the modern society that they wished to create and sought to enact policies that would erode the bazaar's importance. They were aware that the alliance of the mercantile and artisan forces of the bazaar with the Shi'i clergy posed a serious threat to royal government, as occurred in the tobacco revolution of 1890-1892, during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, and in the revolution of 1977-1979.

In 1980, the Shah of Qajar granted a concession to Major G. F. Talbot, a British citizen, a monopoly to buy, sell, and manufacture tobacco for fifty years in exchange,

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<sup>69</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 67.

<sup>70</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 68.

“... for an annual rent of £15,000, and a quarter of the annual profits after the payment of all expenses and of a five percent dividend on the capital.”<sup>71</sup> However, it was the bazaaris along with a group of ulama that organized the resistance movement against the Shah.

The dynamics of the Constitutional Revolution were produced, “... when resistance to Qajar absolutism and protests over foreign domination began to be expressed in terms of the modern secular discourse ....”<sup>72</sup> Prior to this period, Iranian resistance was routinely expressed within the constraints of the state’s ideology. Thus, a successful rebellion against the Shah produced the same type of political system that previously existed within the monarchy; however, after the Constitutional Revolution, a new revolutionary direction emerged in Iran for political mobilization.

The emergence of such an alliance between the bazaar and the ulama in the period from 1923-1924 is believed by many scholars to have convinced Reza Shah not to establish a republic, as Atatürk had done in Turkey, but to establish a new dynasty based upon his family. Reza Shah recognized the potential power of the bazaar, and he was apparently determined to control it. As his secularization programs had adversely affected the clergy, many of his economic reforms hurt the bazaar.

His son also sought to control the influence of the bazaar. As a consequence, the bazaar remained a locus of opposition to both Pahlavi shahs. During 1978, the bazaar spearheaded the strikes that paralyzed some sectors of the economy and provided support for the political actions of the Shi’i clergy. In essence, the feared alliance of the bazaar and clergy had once again come to play a pivotal role in effecting political change in Iran.

## **2. The Ulama**

The ulama are learned scholars and jurists, whose religious status make them members of the elite. The ulama played a significant role in the polity of pro-capitalist Iran and continue to control Iranian politics today.

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<sup>71</sup> Moaddel, p. 111, from “Correspondence Respecting the Persian Tobacco Concession”, in Great Britain, *Sessional Papers* 79, (1892), pp. 210-211.

<sup>72</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 114.

The bazaar was not only a marketplace for economic transactions; it was also a type of religious community center. The religious idiom was the basic common denominator in the bazaar. It was the major source of support for the ulama and religious institutions.

Until the implementation of land reform, the conservative faction of the ulama continued to support the Shah. The ulama “were concerned about the threat of land reform to their own property and to the land belonging to the religious institution.”<sup>73</sup> The state’s modernization programs also adversely affected the ulama by eliminating the ulama’s traditional roles in the community. Eventually the state’s action triggered the ulama’s opposition to the Shah and their ascent to the forefront of the revolutionary movement.

Another important role of the ulama, in the context of the revolution, is utilized with respect to the principle of velayat-e-faqih as discussed previously; however, the basic concept according to Khomeini, states that the clergy is the most qualified to lead the nation.

The prophet Muhammad was the original guardian jurist, as both a political and religious leader in his community. After Muhammad’s death, the duty was passed down to his successor, currently known as “Imam.” In accordance with Twelver Shi’i Islam, there have been twelve Imams. The last Imam went into hiding in the ninth century AD. The disappearance or death of the Twelfth Imam established the necessity for the concept of velayat-e-faqih. Before his recluse, the twelfth Imam did not prescribe a method to arrive at legal judgments in his absence.

Traditional Shi’i interpretation limits the scope of velayat-e-faqih jurisdiction to three areas: 1) Guardianship over individuals, such as widows, orphans, or the elderly; 2) Guardianship to protect the property and activities vital to the religious life of the community; and 3) Guardianship to ensure the integrity of the Muslim community by

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<sup>73</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 140.

promoting the Qur'an. "The existence of a jurisprudential velayat over these areas of community life is a matter of virtually unanimous agreement among Shi'i authorities."<sup>74</sup>

Conversely, Ayatollah Khomeini believes that the scope of velayat-e-faqih extends to a fourth area of responsibility that provides direct political authority and daily administrative operation of the government to the jurist by divine mandate. Khomeini's interpretation of velayat-e-faqih was developed as a theological concept to address his concern for Shi'i Islam in Iran from both the West's cultural and political penetration and from the injustices of the Shah's monarchy.<sup>75</sup> Khomeini attributed alienation and loss of spirituality in Iran's Shi'i community to the West and the monarchy. He believed the only conceivable alternative was revolution and the establishment of an Islamic state.

### **3. The Petty Bourgeoisie and the Merchants**

The petty bourgeoisie as a concept is applied to, "small-scale production and ownership, [retailers,] independent craftsman and traders."<sup>76</sup> "More specifically, the petty bourgeoisie are those small-scale handy craft producers and retail traders who are self-employed, own and control the means of production based on routine technology, and have limited control over investment and labor process. In the context of Iran, the members of this class consist of those engaged in metal working crafts, wood working crafts, building and ceramics crafts, textile and leather crafts, food-treating crafts, and retail traders."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Gregory Rose, "Velayata-e-Faqih and the Recovery of Islamic Identity in the Thought of Ayatollah Khomeini," in *Religion and Politics in Iran Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution*, ed. Nikki R. Keddi (London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 169.

<sup>75</sup> Sandra Mackey, *The Iranian: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, (New York: Plume, 1966), p. 50.

<sup>76</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978), p. 204.

<sup>77</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 100.

Merchant was translated from the Persian term “tājir” (tujjar, plural) which refers to a wholesale merchant.<sup>78</sup>

The merchants were engaged in the domestic and international circulation of goods and raw materials according to the well-known principle of ‘by cheap and sell dear’. Having a monopoly over the supply of raw materials for the traditional industries and over the purchase of the finished goods produced by the craftsmen, the merchants were naturally interested in turning the terms of exchange to their own advantage vis-à-vis the craftsmen by forcing the latter to sell their products to the merchants below the value they themselves would have preferred. ... exploitation by the merchants through trade, and the two classes’ divergent trade-policy orientation, offer objective grounds for conflict between the merchants and the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>79</sup>

The merchants were extensively involved in international trade as well as long distance, large-scale domestic trade that contributed to increased class conflict.<sup>80</sup>

State policies favored the large and modern industrial establishments tied to international capital. However, sufficient space was provided for the petty bourgeoisie and the merchants in the labor and consumer markets predominately organized in the bazaar to conduct their economic activities. The bazaris have played a significant role in many protests and revolutionary movements. The following three specific mechanisms underline the bazaars’ political dynamics.

First, the bazaar rested on some sort of de facto coalition between the merchants and the petty bourgeoisie. Except for the Reza Shah period, this coalition had been reproduced since the nineteenth century. Second, the bazaar’s practical experiences have had direct bearing on the politics of religion. Third, while the bazaar had often acted in defense of its economic interests, its strategies of action were shaped by the kind of discourse dominant in society.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 103, quoting Williem M. Floor, “The Merchants [tujjar] in Qajar Iran,” *Zeitschrift Dder Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 126 (1976:101-35, p.101).

<sup>79</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 106.

<sup>80</sup> Ann K. F. Lambton, *Theory in Practice in Medieval Persian Government*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), p. 130.

<sup>81</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 99.

In Moore's work<sup>82</sup>, the petty bourgeoisie-merchant alliance in Iran is demonstrated as a central factor of class politics and religious culture. A principle dictum is "no coalition, no revolution." The coalition between the petty bourgeoisie and the merchants against the government exemplify the application of Moore's conceptual scheme of class politics in Iran.

Although the presence of a common enemy existed, the petty bourgeoisie and the merchants "belonged to the same ideological cultural universes which made their unity in a historically distinctive phenomenon frequently reproduced during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorships and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

<sup>83</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 100.

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### **III. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CLASS, POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY**

To some extent, every country and people are products of their pasts. Iran is no exception. The current political climate in Iran is directly related to its history. A more thorough understanding of contemporary politics in Iran requires some reflection on the political legacy of the revolution. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a political society. It is a theocracy, which is defined as “[a] form of government in which the clergy exercise or bestow all political authority and in which religious law is dominant over civil law and enforced by state agencies.”<sup>84</sup> Although, Iran possesses many political institutions found in a democratic political society, its primary institution ensures that Shi’i Islamic law reigns supreme. The result is institutions established on political leaders while the remainder of the population is marginalized.

#### **A. THE END OF THE REVOLUTION**

According to Moaddel:

The revolutionary crisis began when Shi’i discourse took over the protest movement and transformed social discontent into revolutionary crisis. The power of Shi’i revolutionary discourse that motivated the people to take direct action against the Shah stemmed from the fact that it meant many things to many people. Various mechanisms were also noted through which the revolutionary ideology autonomously contributed to the making of the Iranian Revolution.<sup>85</sup>

Shi’i discourse also shaped significant events in the post-revolutionary period which channeled ideology in a manner that resonated with the dominant interests of the state. As Khomeini and his followers brutally repressed the opposition and eliminated their rivals, the merchants and land owners effectively blocked the movements of the dominated classes, such as the impoverished masses and the minority ethnic groups. Additionally, they removed social revolutionary issues from the agenda of the Islamic

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<sup>84</sup> Dr. Paul M. Johnson, *A Glossary of Political Economic Terms*, in Auburn University Faculty Home Page (1999) Available [online] <<http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss>> [10 October 1999].

<sup>85</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 255.



Republic. Once Khomeini assumed power, Shi'i revolutionary discourse converted to state ideology structured in favor of the merchants and land owners and effectively ended the revolution.<sup>86</sup>

## **B. POST-REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL ORDER**

“[T]he Iranian Revolution does not conform to the existing historical categories known as bourgeoisie, socialist and national liberation revolutions.”<sup>87</sup> The United States and Great Britain directly assisted the Shah in his effort to regain power and in return, the Shah incorporated economic policies that favored the interests of international capital. Although one could argue that these policies resembled a national liberation revolution, as Moaddel points out, the Iranian case does not conform to the existing historical model for a national liberation revolution.

In actuality, national liberation movements refer to the struggles of indigenous classes and groups against direct foreign domination.<sup>88</sup> The state under the Pahlavi regime was not a system of direct foreign domination. The concept of liberation involves a more problematic analysis. Under the Islamic Republic, a more intense social and political dictatorship emerged. The revolution toppled the Shah's political dictatorship but intensified social and political repression with the implementation of strict Islamic law and the establishment of a Supreme Spiritual Leader.<sup>89</sup>

Ulyanovsky, a political theorist from the former Soviet Union, considers the Iranian case to be a democratic, anti-imperialist, bourgeois, Islamic revolution:

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<sup>86</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 255.

<sup>87</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 255.

<sup>88</sup> Jack C. Plano, Roy Olton (ed.), *The International Relations Dictionary* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-Clio, Inc., 1982), p. 35.

<sup>89</sup> The highest authority in the Islamic Republic is the Leader. He is the embodiment of Ayatollah Khomeini's interpretation of velayat-e-faqih; his powers are virtually endless.

Considering its moving force, the form of struggle and the general demands of the people for social justice, the Iranian Revolution was a people's revolution and hence it was democratic. Considering its main direction, the revolution was anti-monarchical and anti-imperialist and strongly anti-U.S. Considering its social content, it was a bourgeois revolution (for the anti-capitalist tendencies were not materialized); and considering the basic form of ideology and the role of the Shi'i leadership, it was an Islamic Revolution.<sup>90</sup>

Moaddel views Ulyanovsky's contention that the revolution was both democratic and bourgeois as highly problematic. First, "the revolution did not end arbitrary rule, nor did it expand the collective capacity of the dominated classes. Workers did not gain the right to strike and form unions, and the land reform movement failed."<sup>91</sup> Thus, the fact that the struggle against the Shah was conducted by a majority of the population that overwhelmingly endorsed the formation of the Islamic Republic does not in and of itself make the Iranian Revolution democratic. In addition, Khomeini and his followers rejected democracy for the simple fact that it was a Western concept. Second, "pre-revolutionary Iran was already a capitalist society, and, therefore, the concept of bourgeoisie revolution does not apply to the changes produced by the revolution."<sup>92</sup> Moaddel continues "Ulyanovsky's argument regarding the bourgeois nature of the revolution is based upon what did not occur in post-revolutionary Iran, by itself a questionable criterion."<sup>93</sup>

Finally, Ulyanovsky suggests that the revolution was Islamic. Algar and Arjomand support this position. Islamic discourse shaped the revolutionary movement of 1977-79 and autonomously contributed to the causes and processes of the Islamic Revolution. Additionally, in the post-revolutionary period, Islam conditioned political

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<sup>90</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 256, quoting Rostilove Ulyanovsky, "The Iranian Revolution and its Outcomes," *Kommunist* 10, July 1982, pp. 110-111 (published in Russian).

<sup>91</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 255.

<sup>92</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 256.

<sup>93</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 256.

conflict and class struggle. The law of Islam, as interpreted by the jurisprudent<sup>94</sup> would govern society as opposed to a society governed by the will of the people. The formation of a theocracy resulted from the revolution's expansion of the ulama's authority from the religious to the political arena. "According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, the jurisprudent had veto power over all the decisions of the executive and legislative branches of the government."<sup>95</sup>

Nevertheless, the Islamic Revolution in Iran as a concept can be misleading. It does not capture the true content of the post-revolutionary changes. First, the principle of jurisprudent governance was not absolute. Although it worked for Ayatollah Khomeini, it proved to present problems. Bazargan stated the Islamic Republic "is a dress sewn to fit the Ayatollah."<sup>96</sup> Additionally, the most learned religious scholar may not necessarily be interested in politics or be in agreement with the political ideology of the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. For example, Ayatollah Shariatmadari's views contradicted Khomeini's views. Shariatmadari was dealt with in an extremely severe manner; he was stripped of his title and clerical position. On the other hand, Ayatollah Montazari was the official faqih and successor to Khomeini; however, he too fell from grace and was expelled from the polity.

One can refer to the rise of Khomeini himself to argue against the principle of valayat-e-faqih. First, Khomeini was not the most learned, but he was the most politically adept cleric, thus he became the Supreme Spiritual Leader. This supports the argument that ideology is the prevailing factor. Second, Islamic discourse became the ideology of power with the end of the revolution. In contrast to the revolutionary situation of 1977-1979, it was debatable whether Islam was still the most important organizing principle of society.

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<sup>94</sup> According to Ayatollah Khomeini, the ayatollahs were the most learned jurists qualified to govern society.

<sup>95</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 257.

<sup>96</sup> Mehdi Bazargan, *The Iranian Revolution in Two Stages* (Tehran: Mehdi Bazargan, 1363/1984), p. 198.

### **C. THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW POLITICAL ORDER**

“Political culture is the product of the collective history of a political system. Questions that naturally emerge from these formulations include whether there are certain forms and conditions of politics that are necessary to support, or at least not inhibit, social and economic development.”<sup>97</sup> The ruling clerics in Iran would answer in the affirmative. In defense of an Islamic Republic where the most learned should rule politically, Khomeini stated that the Shah’s political actions that included economic dependencies on the US, destruction of the agricultural sector, foreign alliances with oppressors and tyrants, oil sales and military assistance to Israel, annihilation of Islam, and Western cultural corruption were not only inconsistent with Islam but criminal.

The Shah’s political action established the core of Khomeini’s political ideology. Consequently, political transition in the IRI has created the emergence of a new political order led by the moderates that does not rely on the legacies of the Iranian revolution but seeks modernization and reforms to transform Iran into an integral part of the industrial world.

Neither Iran’s former authoritarian regime under the Shah, nor the ayatollahs within the Islamic Republic have achieved a meaningful democratic government, thus the reformists have emerged as a formidable political opposition. President Khatami has engaged Iran in a massive effort to initiate economic reforms to promote privatization and encourage foreign investment as a means to provide substantive economic developments.

### **D. POST-REVOLUTIONARY CLASS STRUGGLE**

“Two of the most powerful threads that run through Iran’s history are religion and the monarchy. Sometimes allied, sometimes at cross purposes, they have shaped the destiny and character of the Persians from the outset.”<sup>98</sup>

The current political struggle between the moderates and the conservatives, or more specifically President Khatami and his supporters and Ayatollah Khomeini and the

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<sup>97</sup> Jack C. Miklos, *The Iranian Revolution and Modernization; Way Stations to Anarchy* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> Miklos, pp. 19-20.

supporters of the ruling clerics, is a direct result of this legacy. According to Miklos, the successes and failures of Iran can be explained in its historical past, its cultural legacy, and its institutions. Post-revolutionary change was almost inevitable as the class leadership emerged from the revolution and “participated in political struggles as a distinct social strata with specific interests.”<sup>99</sup>

In the case of Iran, Khomeini espoused a cross-class ideology based on Shi’i Islam. However, as the middle-class divided into various social strata with different economic interests and positions, “[t]he internal heterogeneity of the middle class [was] further exacerbated by divisions along ideological and political stands. The class, for example, includes secular and religious tendencies, highly literate and illiterate people, modernists and traditionalists, and Leftists, Rightists and Centrists groups.”<sup>100</sup> Amirahmadi argues that it is the main reason the middle-class lacks a coherent, strictly middle-class ideology, and stable political stance. This led to ideological factionalism and practical difficulties for the post-revolutionary leadership.

Another difficulty that emerged from the cross class ideology of the middle-class leadership of the revolution was the inability to formulate a coherent, unified development strategy for reconstruction of the post-revolutionary society. According to Tilly, middle class revolutions are largely nationalistic and often adopt an indigenous ideology.<sup>101</sup> Keddie and Hooglund agree that in the case of Iran, where the revolution was to dispel foreign influences, it was only natural to rely upon a native ideology such as shi’ism.<sup>102</sup> While most within the middle class were motivated to advance their socioeconomic and political position toward moderation, pragmatism, and reformism,<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Hooshang Amirahmadi, *Revolution and Economic Transition: The Iranian Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Amirahmadi, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 191.

<sup>102</sup> Nikki R. Keddie and Eric Hooglund (eds.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Islamic Republic* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 74.

<sup>103</sup> Amirahmadi, p. 4.

the leadership of the Islamic Revolution moved toward radicalism and strict ideological considerations of Islam.

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#### IV. POST-REVOLUTIONARY IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

The ideological struggle for power between the moderates and the conservatives is the major issue of contention in the IRI. Amirahmadi stated that the prevailing ideology “is a conjectural matter and depends on the relative strength of the various strata, their authenticity and ability to legitimize their drive for hegemony in the larger society, and the nature of the political movement.”<sup>104</sup>

In light of the fact that Khatami has been elected to two terms as President by an overwhelming margin each time and that the majority of the population is demanding democratic reforms, one would assume that the moderates would easily assume power. However, the conservatives are relying on many of the radical methods of Khomeini to retain power and maintain authority over the Islamic Republic. For example, the hardliners<sup>105</sup> have led relentless attacks against the media. Several newspapers have been suspended or permanently closed.<sup>106</sup> Numerous journalists have been arrested and prosecuted and there have been disappearances and suspicious deaths of several writers and free expression advocates for criticism of the Islamic Republic and its philosophical foundations.<sup>107</sup> Khomeini publicly accused certain newspapers of succumbing to western attitudes about Islam and the revolution. Khomeini stated that “critique or criticism of the government’s policies are not bad, but when someone attempts to undermine the foundations of the government, it is a treason and not freedom of expression.”<sup>108</sup>

In response, students have staged demonstrations in Tehran to protest the state’s repressive measures against the press.

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<sup>104</sup> Amirahmadi, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> The hardliners are strict Islamic Fundamentalists, e.g., the conservative ulama.

<sup>106</sup> “Country Report: Iran”, December 31, 1998, [www.cpj.org](http://www.cpj.org).

<sup>107</sup> “Country Report: Iran”, December 31, 1998, [www.cpj.org](http://www.cpj.org).

<sup>108</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, “Country Report: Iran”, [www.cpj.org](http://www.cpj.org) (December 31, 1998), p. 1.



## **A. POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC REFORMS**

President Khatami wants to make fundamental changes in Iran's foreign relations as well as liberalize the revolution. Khatami believes there should not be a clash of cultures and that Islam and other cultures have much to teach one another. These views are in direct contradiction with the conservative mullahs that control Iran's key institutions – military, judiciary, and state television and radio – and have exerted their authority with a vengeance to restrain reformers and retain their power.<sup>109</sup> Khatami has made efforts to improve relations with the Arab Gulf States and the Arab world, he has begun a dialogue with Iraq at the Ministerial level, and he has improved relations with Turkey.<sup>110</sup> In addition, Khatami has taken new steps to improve the Islamic Republic's relations with the European Union and to some extent the United States.

## **B. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES – CONTAINMENT OR COOPERATION**

### **1. European Union**

There is a consensus of most Middle East experts that Iran requires both investment and financial credit to ignite its dismal economy. Thus, continued relations with Europe are vital for the economic development of the Islamic Republic in light of the ongoing hostility between Iran and the United States.

The European Union has continued to make overtures for normal relations with Iran. Many European countries have welcomed Khatami's initiative to open relations with the West. "Although they are not comfortable with it, even Iran's conservatives recognize the importance of normalizing ties with the West – falling oil prices over the past decade have diminished Iran's ability to go it alone economically, and restoring trade relations with stronger economies has become critical to Iran's well-being."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Fen Montaigne, "Iran: Testing the Waters of Reform", *National Geographic* (July 1999).

<sup>110</sup> Maloney, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> "Struggle for Iran's Soul," *Making Sense of Iran*, [www.time.com](http://www.time.com).

“Iran’s relationship with Europe has [arguably] always been better than its relationship with the United States. Many European countries maintained diplomatic ties and commercial relations with Iran, even during the heady days of the revolution.”<sup>112</sup> Critical dialogue between Europe and Iran has continued since 1992, however, little has taken place to influence Iranian behavior. Conversely, in 1999 Khatami visited several European countries and European leaders declared that Iran was no longer committing terrorist acts abroad and that it was cooperating on women’s issues.<sup>113</sup>

Byman argues that Iran intentionally sought to divide Europe from the US by offering the Europeans access to its markets. It is also believed that Iran wants to encourage foreign investment from Europe and Japan to isolate the United States.<sup>114</sup>

## **2. United States**

On September 11, 2002, the United States experienced the worst terrorist attack in its history by an Islamist cell linked to Usamah bin Laden. In a multi-plane hijacking, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked and thousands of citizens were killed. The US launched an International War against terrorism and solicited the support of all the Middle Eastern countries. Iran declined to participate in a US led Anti-Terror Coalition.<sup>115</sup> Iran’s refusal to participate is partly due to US support for Israel – “enemy of Iran and Islam”<sup>116</sup> and because of the US’s position as the lead country. However, the following responses from Iran are indicative of its decentralized rule and political instability. Khatami stated that Iran would participate in a UN lead Anti-Terror coalition – demonstrating neutrality to the US but support for the cause. After a speech in which President Bush condemned terrorist attacks against the US, Ayatollah Khomeini publicly

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<sup>112</sup> Daniel L. Byman, et al., *Iran’s Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2001), p. 86.

<sup>113</sup> De Ballaique, “The Struggle for Iran,” p. 57.

<sup>114</sup> Byman, et al., p. 86.

<sup>115</sup> [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com).

<sup>116</sup> David Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society, and Power* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2001).

stated that the US cannot escape judgment for its own action – an open and hostile admonishment of the US. The general public in Iran empathizes with the US. On one occasion, Iranians gave a moment of silence to the victims of the “9-11” tragedy during a soccer game and on another occasion Iranians gathered at a public park to demonstrate publicly – both expressions of sympathy in support of the US.

In light of the current circumstances and after more than 20 years of animosity, the US has adopted a more cautious position towards Iran than Europe. The US has indicated a willingness to open dialogue with Iran. However, at the same time the US has given Khatami the kiss of death, from accusations of Iran’s assistance to Taliban and al-Qaeda members after September 11 and from comments made by President Bush in his State of the Union address in January 2002.

President Bush publicly accused Iran of assisting Taliban and al-Qaeda members that had crossed the border into Iran and for supporting rebel forces in Afghanistan. Iran vehemently denied the accusations. President Khatami stated that the border was 600 miles long and that if the US pointed out where rebels were crossing the border Iran would apprehend them.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, in his State of the Union address, President Bush identified North Korea, Iraq, and Iran as part of an “Axis of Evil.”<sup>118</sup> This has arguably been the harshest language used by any US administration to describe these countries. Once again, Iran vehemently rejected the charges. According to the official state news agency in Iran, IRNA, the Islamic Republic considered President Bush’s remarks as interference in its internal affairs.

Although relations between the US and Iran are warming, there is still a great deal of work ahead, as is evident from the current situation.

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<sup>117</sup> [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com).

<sup>118</sup> “Christiane Amanpour: Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ warning, [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) (January 31, 2002).

### C. THE POTENTIAL FOR COOPERATION

In order to evaluate the potential for cooperation between the US and Iran, one must analyze the current reforms in the Islamic Republic in relation to its political resistance with the mechanisms necessary for change.

The reform movement has transformed the domestic debate from one concerned with whether the Islamic system should change to one focused on how much and how quickly the change should occur. Although the hardliners do not want to see the mending of relations with the US (the so-called “Great Satan”), President Khatami has clearly pursued an agenda with the intention of rapprochement. At the meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Tehran in 1997, President Khatami stated that Islamic civil society and its western counterpart were not necessarily in conflict in their manifestations and consequences and that Iran should not be oblivious to positive accomplishments of Western civil society.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, Khatami condemned terrorism and called for peaceful relations among all Islamic states.

Similar to the hardliners but from a cautious vice ideological perspective, there are US policy makers that are not optimistic about the future of political relations with Iran. In “The Rise of Iran’s Reformers,” James Phillips of the Heritage Foundation suggests that the US remain cautious in its responses to Iran and “maintain economic sanctions to give Tehran maximum incentives to end its support of terrorism, violent opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process, and development of weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>120</sup>

Michael Rubin agrees that no diplomatic or economic carrots should be used when dealing with Iran until the government reigns in its vigilante judiciary, military, and security forces that oppose US-Iran relations.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Maloney, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> James Phillips, “The Rise of Iran’s Reformers Requires a Cautious U.S. Response,” *The Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum* #653 (February 25, 2000).

<sup>121</sup> Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami’s Iran* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001).

Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies disagrees with the use of sanctions. Cordesman states that sanctions have never been useful and should be repealed along with Executive Orders blocking trade and limiting US-Iran non-official contact if prospects for a breakthrough in US-Iranian relations should suddenly improve.<sup>122</sup> Likewise, the Honorable Cyrus R. Vance, former US Secretary of State, agrees that it is time for the US to establish diplomatic relations with Iran.<sup>123</sup> Secretary Vance believes that once diplomatic relations are established other legitimate grievances, including US concerns about terrorism, the peace process, and weapons of mass destruction, can be addressed.

### **1. The Basis for Political Resistance**

According to Geoffrey Kemp of the Nixon Center, it is in America's strategic interest to seek normal relations with Iran. Kemp lists the following realities as conditions to present US-Iranian relations:

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<sup>122</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Gulf in Transition US Policy Ten Years After the Gulf War: The Challenge of Iran" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 30, 2000).

<sup>123</sup> "US-Iran Relations: Has the Time Come?", [www.Iranian.com](http://www.Iranian.com).

First, the Clinton Administration's attempt to isolate Iran politically through containment has failed. Second, Iran's anti-Israeli policy is a major obstacle to normalization. So long as Iran pursues policies that directly threaten Israel, neither the Clinton Administration nor the Congress will initiate or accept radical changes in American policy. Third, the election of Mohammed Khatami to the Iranian presidency has radically changed the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics. Yet, until he and his moderate supporters gain control of the key instruments of power, his proposed reforms and even his tenure in office could be in jeopardy. Fourth, unfavorable economic and demographic trends in Iran pose serious challenges for any Iranian leader, whether moderate, centrist or radical. Fifth, the negative impact of American sanctions on Iran's vital energy sector provides a strong incentive for the regime to improve relations with the United States. Sixth, America remains a dominant factor in Iran's strategic, political, economic, and psychic ethos. The regime's conservatives realize that a rapprochement will inevitably mean a diminution, if not end, to their power. Seventh, Iran faces serious security challenges in its neighborhood. It will continue to develop surface-to-surface missiles and an infrastructure to exercise a nuclear weapons option in event that the security environment deteriorates.<sup>124</sup>

Suzanne Maloney of the Brookings Institute agrees with Kemp that the conditions that form the basis for the political resistance between the US and Iran can be broken down accordingly: Washington's concerns about Iran focus on three primary areas: Iran's support for terrorism; Iran's opposition to the Middle East Peace Process; and the development of weapons of mass destruction. Secondary American concerns include human rights violations, especially as they relate to Iran's religious minorities.

Iran's position is also well established, its government has consistently rejected direct diplomatic contacts with Washington while: sanctions remain in place and pre-revolutionary financial claims remain outstanding. Tehran also vigorously disputes the US military presence in the Gulf and a host of American policies toward the region, past and present. The escalating cycle of Israeli-Palestinian violence has shattered the fragile beginnings of regional reconciliation and consumed US diplomacy.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, *America and Iran: Road Maps and Realism* (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Maloney, p. 2.

While the differences for the stand-off are clear, the mechanisms for addressing them are not. Both sides present divergent demands that effectively negate one another. Washington insists on a government-to-government dialogue approach before considering its restrictions on trade and investment against Iran, however, Iran demands a resumption of economic ties and refuses to condone any normal diplomatic interchange until these conditions are met.

## **2. Mechanisms for Change**

Both Kemp and Maloney concur that Khatami's modest progress to reform Iran can facilitate rapprochement. Maloney suggests that the following key common interests that the US and Iran share can provide for a new approach to reconciliation: 1) managing the threat posed by Saddam Hussein restricting the flow of drugs and unrest from Afghanistan and 2) establishing greater stability in the troubled Caucasus region. Commercial ties would both benefit Iran's troubled economy and open US companies to an untapped consumer market and massive energy reserves that are ripe for increased investment.<sup>126</sup>

In addition, Iran has a disproportionately young and well-educated population that is situated at the wellspring of the world's petroleum supplies and at the crossroads of Asia's emerging democracies and markets. These youth are uniquely positioned to either enhance the interests of the US and its allies in a peaceful and economically vibrant future, or, alternatively, situated to sow greater chaos and instability.<sup>127</sup>

Puneet Talwar<sup>128</sup> and Daniel Brumberg<sup>129</sup> both agree that the time for moderate engagement of Iran is now. Talwar suggests that American policy make subtle but significant shifts to encourage Iran's evolution in a direction to benefit both countries.

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<sup>126</sup> Maloney, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> Maloney, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> Punjeet Talwar, "Iran in the Balance," *Foreign Affairs Magazine* (July/August 2001).

<sup>129</sup> Daniel Brumberg, "End of a Brief Affair? The United States and Iran," (March 2002).

He uses the election of Khatami to a second term as president as evidence that the Iranian public endorses further change. Brumberg goes one step further. He suggests that political and economic incentives be used to engage Iran. Brumberg recommends that Iran be encouraged to cooperate in Afghanistan and that economic sanctions be lifted in exchange for “Tehran’s unambiguous official commitment to back peace between the Palestinians and Israel and to cease all support for Palestinian groups or individuals resorting to terrorism.”<sup>130</sup>

In opposition to this view, Michael Rubin<sup>131</sup> recommends that diplomatic and economic interaction remain at a standstill until Islamist conservatives have been put in check. Ruben’s position is that as long as legally constituted forces within the judiciary, military, and secret police as well as extremist groups adamantly oppose the reformists, neither diplomatic nor economic carrots should be offered.

Wilfried Buchta<sup>132</sup> paints a different picture. Buchta suggests that Khatami may not prevail in the reformists struggle for power against the conservatives and that Khatami’s future may equal Bani-Sadr’s past.

### **3. Rapprochement**

Kemp believes there is potential for limited rapprochement between the US and Iran and the odds have greatly improved since the election of Khatami as President. Domestically, according to Maloney, reformers must “build on their institutional strengths by replacing the recalcitrant members of Khatami’s compromise cabinet .... Domestic reform must find new allies among the conservatives’ pragmatic wing, which is increasingly adjusting to Iran’s new political climate and arguing for change as a religious imperative.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Brumberg, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami’s Iran* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001), p. 105.

<sup>132</sup> Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p. 23.

<sup>133</sup> Maloney, p. 5.



On the international level, Khatami has initiated a reform program. The general consensus among the upper hierarchy supports the expansion of Iranian relations with regional and international allies, such as India, China, and Russia. Annually, in excess of 750,000 Iranians enter an economy with insufficient opportunities to support them; greater than 50 percent will face unemployment.<sup>134</sup> Khatami's calibrated attempt to establish alliances with important regional allies will affect this economic imperative on Iran's foreign policy.

It is imperative that any new approach ensures that the Iranian government has an increased interest in its own stability and peace (which includes no longer supporting terrorism) within the Middle East region. This approach must also engage Iran in a dialogue of the most urgent American concerns and encompass durable but varied incentives and penalties. The question of incentives versus isolation or containment remains. The prevailing logic that isolation presents the US's most powerful weapon is erroneous; incentives are a significant improvement to this view.

In its internal political struggle, Iran must convincingly demonstrate an international pragmatism that can effectively maximize US influence. Isolation or containment of Iran contributes to the political cause of the hardliners and should be avoided. Elimination of the lack of diplomatic discourse with modest economic engagement and the Islamic Republic will promote compliance with international rules and standards, and incorporate a greater regional stake in the government's future.<sup>135</sup>

Commercial interaction can facilitate diplomatic relations, such as with the British-Iranian rapprochement. With incentives, Iranian foreign affairs can improve and increased trade with Europe will continue to demonstrate the importance of dispute resolution.

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<sup>134</sup> Maloney, p. 5.

<sup>135</sup> Maloney, pp. 5-6.

## V. CONCLUSION

The Iranian Revolution was an amalgamation of many different factors that worked collectively to produce this unique outcome. Individually, they would not have had the force to provide the foundation for a revolution.

Revolutionary theory combined several perspectives of revolutionary thoughts to produce the correct ideologies and class for the revolution and the White Revolution created the external stimuli to prompt the multiple classes to form a coalition.

The Revolutionary middle class which provided the foundation for the revolution was, "...dissatisfied with the state's economic policy. However, neither their grievances nor their organizations and resources by themselves explained their revolutionary actions against the state."<sup>136</sup> However, in conjunction with Shi'i revolutionary discourse and the fundamental leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, the actions of the members of the middle class coalition moved in a revolutionary direction to overthrow the Shah's regime.

Currently, the ideological battle for control persists in Iran; however, this internal struggle for power between the ruling clerics and the reformists must play out before Iran can effectively transition into democracy. The masses are demanding that the Islamic Republic move in the direction of social evolutionary transformation. Thus, the question is no longer will transformation take place but when. Additionally, the US should discontinue its policy to influence the internal political struggle in Iran based on its consistent miscalculation of the intricacies of Iran's domestic politics.

The US desperately needs a new approach, as containment has not achieved its desired objectives of isolating the Islamic Republic, converting the regime to the cause of regional peace, and preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In addition, containment has promoted ineffective policies that have alienated US allies. The new approach must prevent terrorism, proliferation, ensure energy security, and promote human rights while fulfilling US national interests.

Political development in the Islamic Republic of Iran has been dependent on the internal class struggle for power between the ruling elite. Iran remains a dominant,

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<sup>136</sup> Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*, p. 99.

political, economic, and military power in the Middle East— a region that holds the largest portion of the world’s energy reserve. Undoubtedly, the Western World would prefer to see the IRI become a progressive and democratic state with whom they could normalize and deepen their relations. However, before this transition becomes a reality, the moderates in Iran face a daunting task in their efforts to overcome the deeply entrenched fundamentalists who hold and occupy strategic, as well as, important positions of authority within the Islamic Republic.

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